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***NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service Weekly
Statewide Influenza Activity Summary***

Week Ending October 14, 2005

Influenza level of activity: "NO ACTIVITY"

Influenza testing performed in New Jersey by:

- ◆ The Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL)*
- ◆ The WHO and NREVSS (National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System)* Laboratories from September 20, 2005 to present:
 - Number of influenza A culture confirmed cases: None
 - Number of influenza B culture confirmed cases: One

This is the fourth week of the 2005-06 influenza season in New Jersey. The NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service has not been notified of any influenza outbreak or increased activity in any health care facilities, nursing homes or schools throughout the state. One culture positive specimen was reported by one of the two laboratories mentioned above and the specimen has been sent to the CDC for further testing and antigenic typing.

Rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) from nursing homes and emergency department visits are 1.28% and 3.69% respectively while the rate for school absenteeism is 4.13%.

Hospital laboratory surveillance for respiratory syncytial virus (often clinically indistinguishable from influenza virus infection) showed only a few positives. The monthly RSV summary will be updated at the end of the month.

A few of the county percentage parameters showed figures well above the total average (see 11Oct05 pdf Table) but should not be interpreted as an increased level of activity since the denominator of reporting entities is very small.

Based on the data collected from the entire ILI Surveillance System, the level of influenza activity in the state of New Jersey is at a "NO ACTIVITY" level this week. This level of activity is comparable with the same period last season.

The Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee has recommended that the 2005-06 trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV) for the United States contain:

- A/New Caledonia/20/99-like (H1N1),
- A/California/7/2004-like (H3N2), and
- B/Shanghai/361/2002-like viruses.

This recommendation was based on antigenic analyses of recently isolated influenza viruses, epidemiological data, and post-vaccination serologic studies in humans. Also as a result of the uncertainties regarding production of influenza vaccine, the exact number of available doses and timing of vaccine distribution for the 2005-06 influenza season remains unknown.

Based on CDC's September 2, 2005 MMWR, only the following priority groups are recommended to receive TIV between now and October 24, 2005:

- Persons aged ≥ 65 years with comorbid conditions
- Residents of long-term-care facilities
- Persons aged 2-64 years with comorbid conditions
- Persons aged ≥ 65 years without comorbid conditions
- Children aged 6-23 months
- Pregnant women
- Health-care personnel who provide direct patient care (EMS staff are included in this category, police and fire staff are not)
- Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children aged < 6 months.

After October 24, persons not listed in the above priority groups may be vaccinated.

The DHSS website listing the local health department clinics is now operational and is available at <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/>. The public can get information on where flu shots are being given from the website.

Influenza virus infection itself is not a clinical or laboratory reportable disease in New Jersey according to N.J.A.C. 8:57. Accordingly, activity levels must be extrapolated from weekly monitoring activities of healthcare facilities and providers dispersed around the state.

Another human case of H5N1 avian influenza was confirmed by WHO reference laboratory in Hong Kong. The initial investigation revealed that the patient, a 21-year-old man from Indonesia contacted the virus by direct exposure to diseased and dying chickens in his household. He is the fifth laboratory-confirmed case of H5N1 infection in Indonesia. Three out of the five cases were fatal. For more information go to <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>

Researchers at the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) have successfully reconstructed the influenza strain responsible for the 1918 pandemic. For more information go to <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

Meanwhile the NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service currently advises that travelers to countries in Asia with known outbreaks of influenza A (H5N1) should avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animal.

All healthcare providers in the state of New Jersey should strictly implement the universal respiratory infection precautions when attending to suspected cases, and report all suspected cases to the NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service.

*The laboratories conduct testing of pre-season isolates and the first isolates of the season. These isolates can provide information regarding circulating strains and information necessary for the vaccine formulation for the following year's flu season. Also test results from representative samples collected during peak influenza activity, late in the season, and after a major influenza outbreak, may identify new variants that are just beginning to circulate in the community, helping to inform vaccine formulations for the following year.

References and Resources:

- <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/preventflu.shtml>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/>